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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 850

By Chumney

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Mrs. Mertie Willigar
Buckman of Memphis.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should pause to remember the accomplishments of those Tennesseans who, during their respective lifetimes, served their fellow citizens with the utmost integrity, dedication, and ability; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Buckman was an exemplary public servant and consummate professional who worked assiduously to improve the quality of life for her fellow citizens in numerous capacities; and

WHEREAS, Flora Mertie Willigar was born in Lyme, New Hampshire, on October 19, 1904; upon her parent's death she helped care for her sister, Bernis; and

WHEREAS, with the help and encouragement of her aunt and uncle and her own determination, she earned bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Washington; and

WHEREAS, dedicated to educational excellence and professionalism, Mrs. Buckman served with probity as a home economics teacher at the University of Minnesota, the University of Kentucky, and the University of Louisville; and

WHEREAS, keenly aware of the educational and economic disparity that many women experience, Mrs. Buckman had a life-long interest in education and, particularly, education for women; and

WHEREAS, she taught literacy classes during the early '60s, her love for education grew through the years, and the Buckman family name is widely associated with education in the Memphis area; and

WHEREAS, she met Stanley J. Buckman while serving as an instructor at the University of Minnesota, and the two were joined in holy matrimony on August 19, 1933; and

WHEREAS, Dr. and Mrs. Buckman co-founded Buckman Laboratories in Memphis in 1945; Buckman Laboratories, Inc. is a privately held, multinational, chemical corporation that invents, develops, manufactures, and markets specialty chemicals for industrial usage; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Buckman was appointed assistant secretary-treasurer in 1963, and held that position until her retirement in 1993; she also served with acumen as a member of the Board of Directors from the company's inception and was an active member of the Board until 1999; and

WHEREAS, in addition to her dedication to the Laboratories, Mrs. Buckman was a Trustee of Christian Brothers University and served on the Advisory Board of LeMoyne-Owen College; she was also an Honorary Trustee of Rhodes College from 1983 to September 1997, and honorary Chairman of the Margaret Hyde Council at Rhodes College; and

WHEREAS, she led a strong Christian life and was dedicated to concern for others and simplicity of life style; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Buckman was an active and devout member of the Raleigh Presbyterian Church, which she served faithfully for many years as elder emeritus; she was a member of the Church Women United for more than 30 years; and

WHEREAS, Mertie Buckman was also a life member of the American Association of University Women; and

WHEREAS, a longtime resident of Shelby County, Mrs. Buckman was a highly respected member of Memphis; the community has been influenced and enriched by her caring spirit and generous gifts; and

WHEREAS, devoted mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, first lady of Buckman Laboratories, community leader and former teacher, Mertie Willigar Buckman personified the word, philanthropist; and

WHEREAS, she focused that philanthropy on education, giving her time and resources to many and varied institutions; she donated millions of dollars to schools and universities that have and will continue to impact many generations of young lives; and

WHEREAS, Mertie Buckman quietly went about her work without striving for recognition. She was interested in and concerned about not only people who were close to her but about the world in general, and she shared her grace and wisdom with many; and

WHEREAS, one of her fondest desires was that all people would have the opportunity to reach their full potential; her estimable efforts made those opportunities possible; and

WHEREAS, some of the countless organizations that have benefited from her support include, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, Ronald McDonald House, YWCA of Greater Memphis, Women's Foundation for a Greater Memphis, Girls Incorporated, Boys and Girls Clubs of Memphis, Salvation Army, Memphis Brooks Museum of Art, Memphis/Shelby County Public Library Foundation, St. Mary's Episcopal School, St. Agnes Academy, and Christian Brothers High School; and

WHEREAS, in recognition of her astounding contributions, Mrs. Buckman has been honored with numerous awards and accolades, some of which are: Awards for Women from the YWCA of Greater Memphis, Outstanding Philanthropist from the National Society of Fund Raising Executives, 1990 Woman of Achievement for Steadfastness from Women of Achievement, Inc., Person of Vision from the Alliance for the Blind and Visually Impaired, and the Algernon Sydney Sullivan Award, The Buckman Building, and Mertie W. Buckman International Internship Program, all from Rhodes College; and

WHEREAS, in addition, she received the Outstanding Citizen of the Year from the Memphis Area Civitan Club, the Trendsetter Award from Girls Incorporated, the Humanitarian Award from the National Conference of Christians and Jews, Medal of Excellence and Panel of Distinguished Women from Mississippi University for Women, and the Medal of Honor, the highest award given to a non-member, from the Daughters of the American Revolution; and

WHEREAS, she also appeared on the cover of *Active Times* as “Memphis’ First Lady of Giving” and in *Women’s News of the Mid-South* as “50 Women Who Make a Difference”; she received the Humanitarian Award from the Memphis City Council, and “Maurelian Award” from Christian Brothers University; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Mertie Buckman was also deeply devoted to her family, and she always endeavored to remain true to family values of the highest order; and

WHEREAS, she was the proud parent of sons, Robert and John; grandparent of granddaughters Kathy and Margaret, grandson Karl, step-grandson Jeff; and great-grandparent of three great-grandchildren, Andrew, Matthew Sean, and Ryan; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Buckman leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all her chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause to remember the bountiful life of this exceptional public servant and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, That we honor the memory of Mrs. Mertie W. Buckman, committed philanthropist, educator, constant professional, and dedicated family leader, reflecting fondly upon her impeccable character and her stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Mrs. Buckman.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.